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# **An Artifact Assemblage from Area B at the Grace Creek Site (41GG33), Gregg County, Texas**

*Timothy K. Perttula*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Grace Creek #1 site (41GG33, GC-1) was situated on a natural alluvial rise on the east side of Grace Creek, about 0.4 km north of its confluence with the Sabine River. On the north side of the site was an abandoned Sabine River lake bed, while to the south was an old channel, as well as a channel lake (Muddy Lake), of the Sabine River. Jones divided the site into three areas (A, B, and C); a midden deposit was apparently located in Area B on the central part of the rise (Jones 1957:Figure 49).

Buddy Calvin Jones identified and worked at the Grace Creek #1 site between 1954 and 1956, while the site was being destroyed for the construction of an earthen dike along Grace Creek and the Sabine River (Jones 1957:201). In addition to the extensive surface collection of projectile points, lithic tools, and ceramic sherds he found there, in areas A–C (Jones 1957:Figure 49), Jones also conducted limited excavations in areas where apparently organically-stained soil and possible feature stains were noted on the scraped surface of the site. In these excavations, he documented midden deposits, a flexed burial in the midden deposits in Area B, two pit features in this area (Pit A and Feature 3), and several small (ca. 10 cm in diameter) post holes in Area C. Jones' (1957:Figure 49) map of the site did not indicate the location of the excavations in Area C, but Jones (1957:205) suggested that aboriginal houses were likely present here.

The ceramic artifacts discussed in this article are from a fire pit in Area B that was excavated by Buddy Jones in October 1956. There are also a number of arrow points in the collections from the site, as well as a large ceramic elbow pipe. These materials are in the collections of the Gregg County Historical Museum in Longview, Texas.

## **Cultural Context**

A recent detailed analysis of the native-made ceramic sherds from the Grace Creek #1 site (Perttula 2011) provided an opportunity to take a new look at sherds from a previously reported early Caddo site in East Texas (cf. Jones 1957; Story 2000). This reanalysis first disclosed that the assemblage of sherds ( $n=1827$ ) was much larger than reported by Jones (1957), and the inspection of the decorated sherds indicated that the Grace Creek #1 site was used during three periods of time: ca. A.D. 400–800, ca. A.D. 850–1050, and after ca. A.D. 1500–1600. The ca. A.D. 850–1050 early Caddo domestic occupation was the time of the site's principal prehistoric occupation.

The ceramics attributed to this early Caddo occupation are primarily from vessels that are grog or grog-bone tempered and have been fired in a low oxygen or reducing environment. These vessels were then cooled in the open air, leaving the vessels with exterior and/or interior lighter-colored and oxidized surfaces (usually the exterior surface of plain and decorated vessels). Based on the number of rim sherds, the vessels in the collected assemblage at the site are equally divided between plain wares (47 percent) and decorated utility wares (47 percent), including jars, bowls, carinated bowls, and bottles, with engraved fine ware vessels represented by only about 5 percent of all the rims from the site.

Among the decorated utility wares, by far the most common decorative elements are horizontal incised lines on vessel rim sherds, and these are from several varieties of Coles Creek Incised, particularly *var.*

*Coles Creek.* Outside of the lower Mississippi Valley, this type is best seen in ca. A.D. 900–1050 Caddo sites in East Texas, Northwest Louisiana, and Southwest Arkansas. Many of these vessels have a distinctive row of impressed triangles below the bottom horizontal incised line, and several other sherds (related to both Coles Creek Incised and Weches Fingernail Impressed) have rows of impressed triangles between horizontal incised lines on vessel rims. Other utility ware types at the Grace Creek #1 site in early Caddo times include Davis Incised, Dunkin Incised, Beldeau Incised, French Fork Incised, Weches Fingernail Impressed, Crockett Curvilinear Incised, and Pennington Punctated Incised. Fine wares of the period at the site are represented by a few sherds of Hickory Engraved and Holly Engraved.

As best as could be determined by the examination of the plain and decorated sherds from the Grace Creek #1 site in the Gregg County Historical Museum collections, the early Caddo occupation at the Grace Creek #1 site on Grace Creek, a southward-flowing tributary to the Sabine River, is contemporaneous with the Alto phase and other taxonomic units defined in the Caddo area. It is clearly not an Alto phase occupation, but instead is suspected to be an early Caddo occupation in a political community of kin-related Caddo peoples focused around the Hudnall–Pirtle mound center (41RK4) (Bruseth and Perttula 2006), a few miles to the southeast, and on the opposite side of the Sabine River from the Grace Creek #1 site.

**Ceramic Sherds from the Fire Pit in Area B**

The October 1956 excavations by Jones at the Grace Creek #1 site, Area B, recovered a small sample of plain and decorated utility ware sherds from a fire pit. This fire pit is different from the other two fire pits that Jones excavated in June 1954 in Area B (Jones 1957:205 and Figure 49).

About 92 percent of the sherds in the fire pit are from grog-tempered vessels, and the remainder are from bone-tempered vessels (Table 1). There are only four decorated sherds from utility ware jars in this assemblage, and all are from grog-tempered vessels.

**Table 1. Ceramic sherds from an Area B fire pit at the Grace Creek #1 site.**

Ware	Grog-tempered	Bone-tempered	N
Plain	65	6	71
Utility	4	–	4
Totals	69	6	75

One lower rim and upper body sherd has diagonal incised lines on the rim, and horizontal brushing marks on the vessel body (Figure 1a). This may be from a Pease Brushed–Incised vessel. One body sherd has a set of parallel incised lines, and another body sherd has closely-spaced rows of tool punctations. The final decorated sherd from the fire pit has a straight-line incised zone filled with rows of tool punctations (Figure 1b). This sherd may be part of the rim of a Maydelle Incised jar that has diagonal opposed incised triangle elements filled with punctations (Suhm and Jelks 1962:Plate 52e). Although the sample of decorated sherds is very small, it is likely that they are from the post–A.D. 1500 occupation at the Grace Creek #1 site: both Pease Brushed–Incised and Maydelle Incised vessels occur in such components along the mid–Sabine River basin.

**Ceramic Pipe**

There is a large Late Caddo period plain elbow pipe from the Grace Creek #1 site in the collections (Figure 2). The pipe has a large bowl—with a 41.0 mm orifice diameter and 25.5 mm in height—a knobbed area where the bowl and the stem meet, and a broad (39.0 mm orifice diameter) stem with a flat lip. This pipe is likely associated with the post–ca. A.D. 1500–1600 Caddo occupation identified in earlier analyses of the decorated ceramic sherds from the site (Perttula 2011).

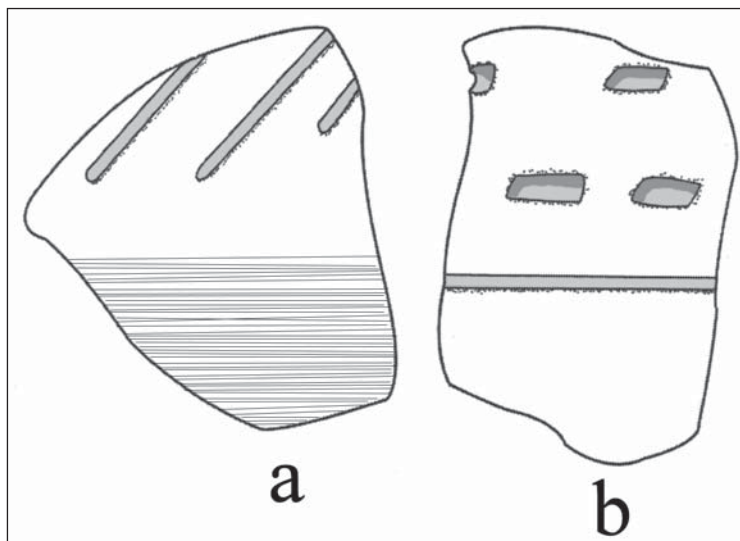


Figure 1. Selected decorative elements on utility ware sherds from the Grace Creek #1 site, Area B.

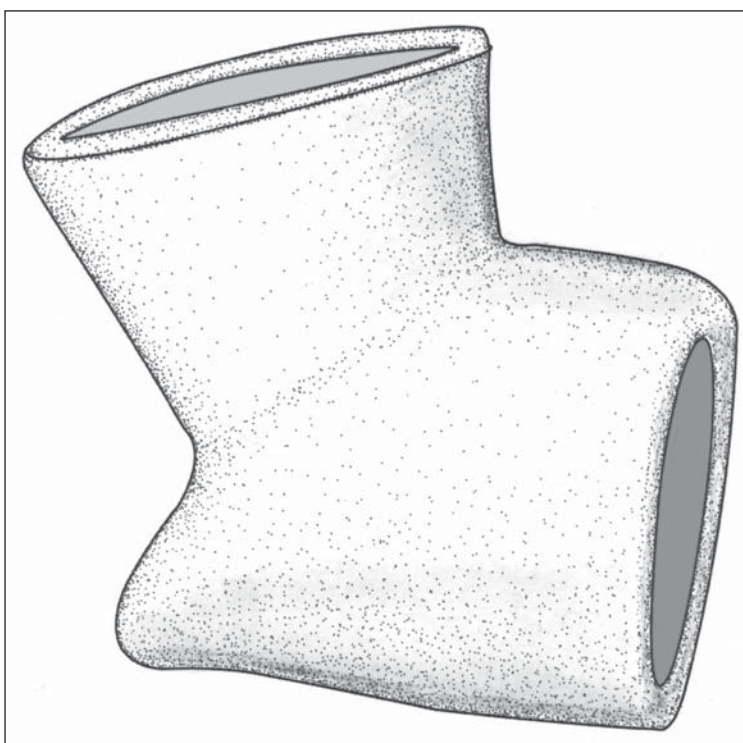


Figure 2. Elbow pipe from the Grace Creek #1 site.

### **Arrow Points**

Jones (1957:212 and Table 1) identified 83 arrow points from the Grace Creek #1 site, including 76 Alba, one Bonham, and six labeled “Type A,” but which are of the Friley type (see Jones 1957:Figure 52k). The Gregg County Historical Museum has 106 arrow points, fragments, and preforms from the Grace Creek #1 site (Table 2). Most of these points are made on local cherts, quartzite, and petrified wood (together totaling 90 percent of the arrow point sample), about 9.4 percent are on non-local cherts whose source is

gravel deposits along the Red River, and 0.9 percent orange novaculite; this material is likely also available in Red River gravels. The non-local cherts and novaculite occur only in the Alba (8.3 percent), Bonham (25 percent), and Catahoula (5.9 percent) types at the site.

**Table 2. Arrow points from the Grace Creek #1 site.**

Type or Category	Raw Materials					
	Local chert	Non-local chert	NOV	QTZ	PW	N
Alba	4	—	1	2	5	12
Bonham	3	2	—	3	—	8
Catahoula	16	2	—	14	2	34
Friley	4	—	—	8	1	13
Steiner	1	—	—	1	—	2
Preform	3	—	—	1	—	4
Unidentified frags.	15	6	—	9	3	33
Totals	46	10	1	38	11	106

local chert: brown, red, reddish-brown, and reddish-gray colors

non-local chert: white, dark gray, light gray, dark brown, grayish-brown, and dark grayish-brown

NOV=novaculite; QTZ=quartzite; PW=petrified wood

According to Shafer and Walters (2010:128), Friley and Steiner arrow points are diagnostic of the Late Woodland period in East Texas, and date from ca. A.D. 700–800. Not including preforms and unidentified fragments, these comprise about 22 percent of the arrow point sample from the site; these points are associated with the Woodland period component at the Grace Creek #1 site estimated to date from ca. A.D. 400–800 based on decorated ceramics (see Pertulla 2011). Most of the Friley and Steiner points are made on local quartzite. The other arrow point types identified from the site—including the Alba, Bonham, and Catahoula points—likely are associated with the Early Caddo period component estimated to date from ca. A.D. 850–1050. These three types comprise approximately 78 percent of the typologically identifiable arrow points from the Grace Creek #1 site.

## SUMMARY

A fire pit excavated by Buddy Calvin Jones in October 1956 at the Grace Creek #1 site, Area B (41GG33) contained a small assemblage (n=75 sherds) of plain and decorated ceramic sherds. Almost all of them are from grog-tempered vessels. The few decorated sherds from the fill of the fire pit are from utility ware jars, and the brushed-incised and incised-punctated body sherds may be from Pease Brushed-Incised and Maydelle Incised vessels. These sherds in turn suggest that the fire pit may be a cultural feature associated with the post-A.D. 1500 Caddo component previously identified at the site. The large and plain elbow pipe in the Gregg County Historical Museum collections from the site is also associated with this Late Caddo period component. A large assemblage of arrow points (n=106) from the Grace Creek #1 site are primarily made from local raw materials—principally various earth-toned cherts and quartzite—but non-local cherts and novaculite from Red River gravel sources comprise about 10 percent of the arrow points. About 22 percent of the arrow points are Woodland period types (Friley and Steiner) from the ca. A.D. 400–800 component at the site, while the remainder (Alba, Catahoula, and Bonham) are associated with the ca. A.D. 850–1050 ancestral Caddo component.

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